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Aotearoa Anarchist

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A magazine about changing everything

Aotearoa Anarchist
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The material in this magazine has been written by people from both inside and outside the Wildcat Colllective.

Contributions

We welcome letters and other contributions, including photos, from any anarchists and others of a similar disposition.

For full articles we recommend sending a small summary of your topic before you write the thing, so we can ensure it doesn't replicate what others are writing, or is wildly innapropriate. We reserve the right edit for clarity, length and grammar. Feel free to submit material on the basis that it be published unedited or not at all.

Donations

Feel free to send us money. Make cheques to 'CSAG'. For 10 dollars we'll send you the next two issues of this magazine. We plan to have another issue out towards the end of this year.

Cover: Fascists enjoy a sprinkling of fairy dust at a nationalist demo in Wellington a while back. Photo: Indy Media.

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Anarchitorial

Ya wah wacky woo! Welcome to Aotearoa Anarchist, a new magazine for anarchists in Aotearoa and anyone else who might be interested.

Anarchists in this part of the world have lacked a magazine for some time, following the demise of *The State Adversary*, which appeared rather irregularly from 1986 to 2000 and the more recent and regular, *Dissident Voice*.

In part, this has been a result of activity moving to the internet, an infernal device for taking up time and energy if there ever was one, and also a result of the many fold crises and crimes of capitalism that have taken energy into many other areas.

In this magazine, we hope to provide a forum for people from all over the anarchist spectrum and a wide discussion of the many things anarchists are interested in. This is reflected in the contents of this issue, covering everything from campaigns to kawakawa, Christie to Christianity.

It is also a somewhat introspective issue. The anarchist movement has been a place of ferment lately, with anarchists engrossed in much debate about our methods, our relationships with other political groups, our ethics and our behaviour. While a lot of this hasn't always been much fun, we think we will come out the stronger for it.

One of the Wildcat Collective's main aims has been the promotion of anarchist ideas. We don't believe people will fall into anarchism simply as the result of a mysterious historical force nor will the pressures put on them by those demonic siblings, capitalism and the state, necessarily push them in our direction.

Unless we confidently assert our philosophies and methods, people will remain ignorant of them, and be left stuck in the present mire forever. Anarchists need to be getting out of the bohemian ghetto – not to drag 'recruits' into our organisations – but to spread ideas to people that need them to make it easier to survive today, and hopefully, to thrive tomorrow.

We have a choice – collective struggle against authority, hierarchy, patriarchy, colonialism and everything that goes with it, or spending the rest of our lives being told how to live and how high to jump by a small crowd of powerful idiots. Make your choice and get on with it.

– *Wildcat Anarchist Collective*

Declaration

of the Wildcat Anarchist Collective, June 2005.

WILDCAT exists to promote and encourage moves towards an anarchist society. That is, a society based on a network of communities formed by voluntary agreements based on cooperation and respect for the freedom of others.

We oppose all forms of oppression including sexism, racism, patriarchy, colonialism, religious intolerance, heterosexism, discrimination on the basis of sexuality, class structures, the governing of one person by another and any other form of authoritarianism that may turn up. We understand that many of these forms of oppression are linked and work together to fuck us over.

We consider the class structure of society to be an important, and often ignored, part of the oppressive capitalist and state structures that now control the world, so we focus on exposing and opposing its existence.

We find both private capitalism and state rule creepy and they make us shudder, so we support genuine resistance to authority, but are not the slightest bit interested in those who seek to replace one form of authoritarianism with another.

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PO N32 Petersham North 2049
NSW Australia Ph. 02 95509931

Democracy without the fine print

As an appetizer, *Sam Buchanan* serves up anarchism in a dozen paragraphs...

ANARCHISM, in a nutshell, is a society organised so that people have the maximum choice about how they live. We think having the freedom to live as you choose makes people happier, which is, after all, the whole point of society.

People get to do what they want as long as it doesn't infringe on the freedom of other people, and they take responsibility for their actions and consider the people around them. This means finding ways of working with people who want to live in a similar manner to you and figuring out ways of making decisions with people you don't agree with. Pretty much everything else we've come up with starts from there.

At the moment we have a society arranged so that a few people benefit by dominating everyone else, when it should be a set of organisations and structures that prevent people from dominating others. People are perfectly capable of creating this. Put a few of them together and they usually sort something out and get things done in a fairly decent way. But in the world we live in today people are pushed to compete, to be selfish and told that these ways of acting are not only reasonable, but laudable.

We aren't utopians – in our future society, we'll have to put up with other people doing things we don't like and disagree with. Anarchism is about accepting and managing disagreement rather than crushing it.

Anarchism isn't about making everyone live the way I or somebody else thinks they should. Trying to control other people's lives is something for those who suffer from a rather peculiar attitude to life. We don't tolerate people using violence (other than in self-defence), trying to force their culture on other people or telling people who, or who not to, to have consensual sex with. We want freedom for everyone, regardless of gender, race or which part of the world you were born in.

We think that this will result in a society organised into democratic communities which work together through voluntary agreement. We want people to share the work and share the rewards – how they do this will vary from place to place. We don't think much of the present economic system in which some people get a lot more reward from the work they do than others.

Anarchists are opposed to the state, democratic or otherwise. We think our current 'democracy' is pretty shabby thing, and getting shabbier. Aside from the increasing tendencies of politicians to increase their own power and reduce meaningful decision-making by the public, we get regulated to death, supposedly for our own good, and keep finding that decisions are being made by companies and institutions we have no control over.

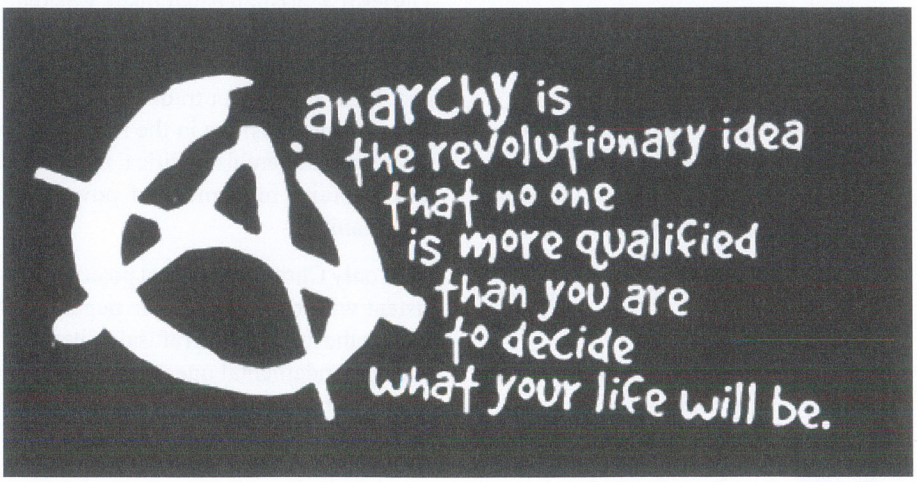
Politicians and political parties are always pointing out the odd useful thing the state does, but this is missing the big picture. The useful things it does are the exceptions, not the rule. The modern state's role is mainly to protect capitalism and make sure social conditions are right for companies to make profits. The state provides infrastructure, sometimes funding, a tolerably healthy and trained workforce and the police and military to keep the kind of order that capitalists require. Capitalism loves the state. The two aren't rivals, they are allies, although the state is becoming increasingly subservient to capitalism. The state protects capitalism and leaves the people at the mercy of the free-market.

You may have noticed that we don't hold with capitalism either. Despite the branding, the free market isn't free and it acts in the interest of business, not in the interest of most people. All it offers us are loads of things we often don't want, don't need and frequently don't work very well anyway.

The great majority of capitalists are mad. Where normal people see land, trees or people, they see dollar signs and human resources. Normal people correctly see life in this world as a miraculous thing offering diversity, possibility and beauty. Capitalism offers you a job. And usually a boring one where you spend most of your time wishing you were someplace else. Capitalism is a stunted, pathetic and stupid way of running things that does nothing for the vast majority of us except to take things away and destroy our hopes and dreams.

So we don't have a blueprint for society, anarchism is a set of methods for moving society in a different direction to the one we are moving in now. There is no final goal – we will always have things to sort out and try and do better. Hopefully we will soon get to a stage where we can do this in a much more fun, relaxed and pleasant way. Unlike today's world where we run around dealing with crises or just putting up with things as we slog on from day to day.

We shouldn't have to live like this. Things can be made better. This is anarchism.@@@



Christian Anarchism: the revolution of hope

On the first weekend of July 2006 at Poututerangi Marae, Te Puna, Aotearoa New Zealand held its very first Christian anarchist conference. People travelled from Perth, Brisbane, Auckland, Hamilton, Wellington, and Tauranga. The hopeful might comment that a mustard seed was sown.

By Graham Cameron

Now the most common question that I am asked is: what is Christian anarchism? The question is laced with a fair dollop of amusement, or in the case of Challenge Weekly, a national 'Christian' newspaper, (when receiving our conference advertisement) a fair dollop of horror:

"Challenge Weekly has guidelines on what we can or cannot publish whether editorial or advertising... Anarchism is normally associated with anti-government behaviour and overseas this often means violence e.g. skinheads and Nazi sympathizers etc." (C. Mellors, customer services, Challenge Weekly; e-mail communication, April 19th, 2006)

This particular e-mail response demonstrates a commonly held belief: Christians are not anarchists, and anarchists are not Christians. Indeed, it suggests that for Christians, it is an offence by association.

There was, of course, a time when being associated with Jesus of Nazareth was an offence. Such subversives were called atheists because they refused to worship the emperor. They called themselves 'Followers of the Way'.

That all changed when Constantine became the highest profile nominal Christian in the Roman world and made Christianity the preferred religion of the state. This was a significant sea change, and the church has been in a long, slow wrestle with Hell for its soul ever since.

Christian Anarchism is a relatively new name in a long and fertile power-less movement that claims whakapapa to Christ's legacy. This power-less[1] view contends with Christendom, a power-full movement that has presumed its full ownership of Christ's legacy.

The most recent demonstration of a power-full church is the driving force of Christendom in the U.S. politics that have put an oppressive American army into Iraq.

This power-less movement has been modeled since the inception of the church, by the underground church in the Roman empire, the Anabaptists, the Amish, the Mennonites, the incredible scope of the 20th Century international inter-faith non-violent writings of Gandhi, Khan, Kagawa, Jones, Andrews, and Tolstoy.

Here in Aotearoa it has been modeled by Tohu Kakahi and Te Whiti o Rongomai at Parihaka, by Rua Kenana at Maungapohatu, by Archibald and Hemi Baxter and all their supporters. There have been others as well, making the case that power-lessness is not a new idea.

The term 'Christian Anarchism' was really only coined 20 years ago by Jacques Ellul, the French theologian and sociologist. Ellul saw no contradiction, but definitely some tensions in the relationship between the anarchist political movement and the faith movement of power-less Christianity:

"The only Christian political position consistent with revelation is the negation of power: the radical total refusal of its existence, a fundamental questioning of it, no matter what form it may take." (Ellul 1988:173)

"Biblical thought leads straight to anarchism..." (Ellul 1988:157)

"Anarchism is the only answer to the modern state and politics when the milieu and action become technical and order and organisation are imposed..." (Ellul 1964:198)

The particular challenge that Christianity poses to anarchism is to the anarchist belief in progress. Christianity offers hope that is not predicated on outcome, that is not discouraged should an anarchist society not eventuate. Indeed, Christianity clearly doubts the capacity of humanity to bring about revolution within itself. We have a pessimistic hope.

Yet Ellul's concept of Christian anarchy is established on the belief that a radical personal and collective revolution is needed to subvert/replace/transform/overthrow the social and political structures and technology that destroy the human person. Importantly a purely political revolution will not achieve this. Nor is it that Christian social or political action has more meaning in itself. Rather it is that Christan anarchy is a prophecy, a counter-cultural voice of hope that states that it is the action of God and humans fully realising their God-given potential, which will fundamentally change society.

Based on this theoretical foundation, what is Christian anarchism in Aotearoa New Zealand? It is my belief that Christian anarchism today is consciously counter-cultural in that it:

- Does not claim to be a theory, but an impulse of humanity;

- Seeks to create an ethical society free of the assumed 'need' for coercion and domination;
- Will only move towards that society by the use of ethical strategies and tactics, notable in its commitment to non-violence and personal transformation;
- Seeks to disperse power, not seize it, so it can be lived out now as power-full systems crumble.

That ethical society is seen in small communities who intentionally seek in their words and actions:

- The devolution of authority;
- The decentralisation of power;
- The redistribution of wealth;
- To unmask the idolatrous consent to alienated labour;
- The conscientization of people;
- The constructive criticism and remoulding of technology;
- To protect and nurture our brother creation.

Even a cursory perusal of the scriptures shows support for ethical societies, the need to transcend and overthrow abusive systems, and the community as the keystone of human physical and spiritual development. Jesus of Nazareth is the incarnation of those grand themes, and continues to partner with us as we seek to follow his example.

Further, I see that in the South Pacific, Christian Anarchists particularly struggle alongside indigenous peoples as our tuakana to realise their dreams, and as a model for us of community that can be more in balance and harmony with our respective whenua.

For our part, my wife, daughters and I live in a small intentional community in Merivale, Tauranga. Our neighbourhood is the detritus of the much-hyped Tauranga urban development. For that reason, I consider Merivale to be full of possibility for revolution.

We are excluded from riches, success, status and fame by virtue of being here. For that reason we are more likely to see that the empire around us is unsustainable, destructive and hateful. Merivale is a seeding bed for the revolution of hope.

My experience of our small community is that Christian Anarchism offers a significant pessimistic hope in a world that is drowning in noise and consumption.

Having a view of scripture that sees the immanent and transcendent revolution that has come and is coming, means I can confidently pray "Your will be done on earth as in heaven." To paraphrase: the revolution is not being televised @@@

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Ellul J., *Jesus and Marx: From Gospel to Ideology,* Translated Joyce Main Hanks, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; 1988.

Ellul J., *Anarchy and Christianity,* Translated Geoffrey W. Bromiley, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; 1991.

Graham Cameron lives in a small intentional community in Merivale, Tauranga. He welcomes comments or questions, and can be contacted at bidoiscameron@paradise.net.nz.

Notes

1. Throughout the article, 'power-less' and 'power-full' are used. They are an attempt to emphasize the juxtaposed and idealized use of power and control in the suggested movements.

Samuel tells the Israelites: Having a government will stuff everything up

And he said, This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you: He will take your sons, and appoint them for himself, for his chariots, and to be his horsemen; and some shall run before his chariots.

And he will appoint him captains over thousands, and captains over fifties; and will set them to ear his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and instruments of his chariots.

And he will take your daughters to be confectionaries, and to be cooks, and to be bakers.

And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your oliveyards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants.

And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers, and to his servants.

And he will take your menservants, and your maidservants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put them to his work.

He will take the tenth of your sheep: and ye shall be his servants.

And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the LORD will not hear you in that day.

– 1 Samuel, chapter 8, The Bible.

Part one

Technology, Development and Social Impact

By Metin Guven

OUR view of technology should not be formed only with regard to its end products, but also by the impact on our lives of the kind of society it requires.

Technology implemented in a society does not only determine the products we use in our daily life, it also determines the production process and how we take part in it. The position we hold in this process depends on how technology is developed by a particular society. If technology is developed to control our lives, production methods will be alienating to our part in this process.

What is technology?

First of all, we need to define the difference between technique and technology. Technique is an efficient and skilful way of achieving a purpose. The purpose may be an artistic one or producing a useful item. For example, making fire by using flint stones is a technique. In a more recent age, making fire by spinning a stick in a piece of wood was another technique.

Technology is a detailed method applied in art or production. A technique can be considered as a technology if it includes a process which requires a detailed description. This doesn't have to be written, but that detailed description cannot be made without a rich vocabulary. For example, making fire with a stick and wood requires a vocabulary because specific trees must be chosen for both the stick and the wood. Also the actions must be described in detail. So a technique becomes a technology when it is socially accepted and the technique is passed from generation to generation by training.

Technology was developed by experiment until 19th century. Until that time science followed technology. Earlier technologies were often developed by a people and kept as a secret of that people. For example, silk was a secret of the Chinese for three thousand years. The Japanese stole the secret by kidnapping four Chinese girls in a special operation in 300 AD.

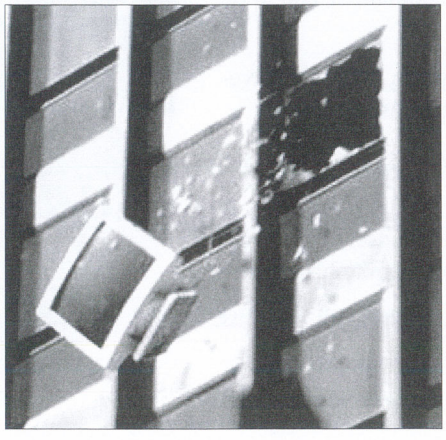
The period of guilds

More advanced technologies were developed during the middle ages. Guilds became the institution maintaining standards for production and technical training. Everyone needed to be an apprentice before working as an artisan in a particular occupation. Whoever wanted to become a master travelled from one town to another working for hourly rates to learn different techniques. They developed their own techniques in this way. Even though it is not a totally open system, techniques could be learned by anyone with the proper education by working with a master. However, getting that education was a privilege of middle class. It was not something an ordinary worker could provide to his son or daughter.

On the other hand, guilds also developed a professional ethic. Working at night and during holidays was forbidden. Guild members had strong expressions of solidarity in the case of members' illnesses or other unexpected situations.

Technology in the industrial period

First, we should clarify what we mean by "industrial". The word "industrial" also means producing goods by using fine techniques, but currently it is mostly used for centralised production for remote markets. Even though the word industrialisation also means applying mechanical production methods, it is mostly used for domination of mass production for remote markets over production for local needs.



Industrialisation started in the textile sector in England. In the early 18th Century, textile production was done by villagers in their houses and they used their own looms. Those renting their looms were in minority. They weren't paid well, but they did have their own time to spend for other activities.

For example, sock producers usually didn't work more than three days in a week. During the 18th Century productivity of looms was further developed, but it was the bosses renting out the new looms and marketing the products who benefited from that development. By the beginning of 19th Century producers couldn't afford the looms and had to work hard all the time to pay to rent the loom. They also had to pay for oil and for maintaining the looms. As production became geared to international markets, they were paid less and had to work more.

Luddite's broke the new looms as a protest against the reduction in wages and increasing control by traders of working conditions, not against the new technology or more mechanisation. They simply wanted to keep control of their working conditions.[1]

Looms powered by water and steam followed. But these inventions didn't make producers more free. On the contrary, free producers doing their job at home were replaced by waged labourers working in the factory. As traders became industrialists, free villagers became wage slaves living in a slum.

Division of labour

In other areas, industrialisation brought more alienation as a result of the divi-

sion of labour. Artisans became workers repeating the same routine without using their brains. Workers were born to repeat the same movements and they had to accept that reality. Marxist socialists didn't even seek an alternative to this mentality[2]. Kropotkin criticised their approach. He said "A revolution is more than the destruction of a political system. It implies the awakening of human intelligence, the increasing of the inventive spirit tenfold, a hundredfold; it is the dawn of a new science – the science of men like Laplace, Lamarck, Lavoisier. It is a revolution in the minds of men, more than in their institutions.

"And economists tell us to return to our workshops, as if passing through a revolution were going home after a walk in the Epping forest!"[3]

From the beginning, the division of labour created by industrialization caused separation between producers and technology developers. Technology started to be developed to keep workers less educated and less creative. They had to be easily replaceable, like a machine part. Eventually workers lost their self-confidence and didn't demand anything more than better working conditions and higher wages. Most workers don't dream of anything further than being ostensibly "free" waged workers – even today.

Artisans used their tools like their organic parts. On the contrary, industrial workers are totally alienated from the machines they use. It is not much different for consumers in industrial society. Before the industrial age each product had a character and different aesthetic approach that came from where they had been produced. Industrial products are the same everywhere. Goods became more accessible, but the things making life more enjoyable disappeared slowly. At the end, the whole of life became a very mechanical routine.[4]

After World War II

In the second half of the 19th Century, science had become the main driver in technological development. For example, the use of electricity created new possibilities. However, after World War II, humanity developed technologies very different from those in previous periods. These technologies affected areas other than the one in which they were developed. Synthetic materials replaced natural ones, computers became widely used to control production and increase productivity in all areas.

By stimulating each other, these technologies created unimaginable increases in production. In the 1970s rises in the price of oil created pressure to increase automation in order to reduce in labour costs. Another trend was moving factories to Third World countries to make use of cheap labour there.

Centralisation in technology

After the 1970s industrialisation of Third World countries appeared to decrease the centralisation of industry. In reality, we saw a higher degree of centralisation. Multinational corporations moved factories to the Third World, but kept the research and development units in Western countries, and increased licensing costs all the time. Regardless of the owner, the companies doing the actual production in Third World countries pay more license costs for each model they produce. They also frequently need to pay for consultants and software products to implement new technologies.

Third World countries don't have an opportunity to develop current technologies because it requires a very high level of investment. Only companies holding a large share of the world market can afford these investments.

In addition, the speed of technology is so high that investments must be made continuously if a company wants to stay competitive. As a result of that reality, many multinational corporations acquired other multinationals to increase their share of the world market and to increase their opportunities to develop more advanced technologies.

Information society?

Until the 1980s it was possible to develop new technologies for a single-nation market. But today technologies are so complex that it is not worth developing them for a limited market. The value of a technology is so high that power in the international arena is not measured by industrial facilities any more. Technology is more important in determining the power of a country or a corporation. Whoever develops a technology determines the price of that technology as well.

During the industrialisation period, the price of industrial products increased against agricultural products, now the price of technology is increasing against industrial products. Biotechnology is an example of increasing control in industrial agriculture by multinational companies.

The "information society" is a matter of

multinationals trying to control the whole of society to generate more profit by using accumulated knowledge. It is not an "information society" allowing decentralisation and sharing the knowledge accumulated collectively over thousands of years.

Ideologues defending industrialisation – regardless of their capitalist or bureaucratic socialist orientation – see these technologies as neutral and support projects like GMO, nuclear power plants, huge dams or motorways. However, these technologies are very different than technologies developed in an ethical professional environment to satisfy actual human needs.

They are not only different because they have lost their aesthetic aspect and local character, but they have been developed to increase the power of a minority.

The history of humanity shows that producers who are not alienated from their work can develop technologies to satisfy actual needs @@@

Notes

(1) "The Luddite Rebellion", Brian Bailey, Sutton Publishing, 1998, page 15.

(2) "The Conquest of Bread", Peter Kropotkin, Part XV, Division of Labor.

(3) ibid. Part XVI, The Decentralisation of Industry.

(4) "The Future of Technics and Civilization", Lewis Mumford, Freedom Press,1986, page 144.

(Part two of this article "Technology in a free society" next issue).

Anarchism and Violence

By Mark, Geoff and Russell

THIS article is about the relationship between anarchists and violence. Primarily, it is for anyone who considers themselves, or is considered by others to be, anarchist. It is about behaviour that hurts people, or deprives others of their freedom or liberty in a violent way.

We decided to write this article in the hope that it will initiate some thought, dialogue and change within anarchist communities – as well as to further strengthen the resolve of those who are already working against violence.

Anarchists and violence

It's hard to define anarchism in one sentence – so let's take some of the core values – mutual aid, voluntary cooperation, respect, freedom, equality. Now look at definitions of violence. Violence is characterised by the imposition of one person's will over another, an abusive or unjust exercise of power. It's hard to view violence as compatible with anarchism.

Many anarchists are not completely pacifist – although they are against violence in most instances, they support violence used in self-defence, such as resisting arrest or armed struggles for independence.

If communities decide that in certain circumstances violence is justifiable, there is a danger that violence becomes normalised or glorified. And in much of the anarchist scene violence has been glorified. There are seemingly countless 'zines, books and websites romanticising anarchist violence. Why? Shouldn't violence be viewed and used only as a last resort? Or are we already living in a time where we have to fight back, using violence as our last resort?

Yep it's the age-old challenge of the ends (anarchy) justifying a "by any means necessary" approach. Yet how can an anarchist temporarily reject her or his core belief against holding power over another individual, and then expect there will be everlasting peace and harmony as a result of that violence?

This dilemma has been getting anarchist knickers all twisted up for a long time now so please don't expect a clear-cut answer.

Violence in society

We don't live in an anarchist utopia. We live in a homophobic, white supremacist, patriarchal world full of violence. We are taught to accept violence (as long as it comes from white men), not to question its validity, and to remain passive and submissive. There is violence on television, in magazines and on the rugby field. Violence is normal, acceptable and in some instances encouraged.

The systems, structures, processes and cultural norms that together give us our society are all centred on the maintenance of power. One of the principle means by which this power is maintained is violence – through the police, the army and the school and penal systems. We should not, however make the mistake of believing that the state has the monopoly on violence.

The New Zealand National Survey of Crime Victims 2001, and the previous one in 1996, paint a fairly clear picture of victims of violent crime and the perpetrators within our country. Remembering that these are only the crimes that were reported, the picture is pretty grim.

The rate of victimisation for assault is almost identical for men and women, with men being slightly more likely to be the victim of assault (most likely to occur at a party or pub). When statistics for threatening behaviour and sexual assault are added, women were significantly more likely to be a victim of violent crime than men, with a much higher rate of repeat victimisation. Women are most likely to be assaulted in their homes.

Most people in the anarchist community are born and raised in mainstream society and are influenced by the same factors that create violence in wider New Zealand society.

While there are no statistics relating gender to incidences of violence within the anarchist community there is little reason to think these figures would differ from mainstream society. Certainly anecdotal evidence, language and attitudes point to a male violence problem in the anarchist community.

Violence in the anarchist scene

Historically, theoretically and within the broader anarchist/activist communities there is no consensus on the legitimacy or utility of violence in general. Anarchist

> *"The vast majority of the world's soldiers are men. So are most of the prison warders, the police, and almost all the generals, admirals, bureaucrats and politicians who control the systems of collective or institutional violence. Most murderers are men. Almost all armed robbers and muggers are men. Nearly all rapists, most domestic bashers, and most people involved in street fights and riots are men.*
>
> *So, whether you are looking at the organised violence of states and governments, or unorganised violence between individuals, most of it is at the hands of men."*
>
> **– Michael Flood – Men, Masculinity and Violence**

theorists Mikhail Bakunin and Errico Malatesta, for example, wrote of violence as necessary and sometimes desirable in revolutionary settings. But at the same time they denounced acts of individual terrorism.

For most anarchists there comes a time when one realises that the system we live in is built upon state sanctioned and perpetuated violence. The temptation to retaliate, to claim the right to violently defend one's convictions can become very compelling. There are a lot of pissed off anarchists who want to take back their freedoms by any means necessary.

What's more, we also consider some violence to be perfectly acceptable, and occasionally even desirable. Property destruction, fighting with police or fascists, the idealisation of guerrilla tactics and the glorification of violent revolutions are often considered to be okay.

The debate on non-violent or violent actions in activist campaigns is long running and has a well-documented discourse. It runs alongside the themes discussed in this article, but to fully explore these issues, it would need an article all of its own. Debates over the difference between damage to property and violence to living beings are also beyond the scope of this article.

However, we could argue that a familiar pattern has emerged: anarchists throw bombs; the state executes them. Anarchist communities rise up in arms; state troops viciously crush them back down and execute the ringleaders. The Black Bloc is armed with sticks and Molotovs as they charge police lines; the State beats the living crap out of them. Blockade that evil store in town; a cop pushes you over and arrests you for assault.

As if being beaten down by the oppressive system we live in isn't enough, some anarchists take their energy, frustration and fears out on each other. After a day on the front lines, they go home, drink beer and listen to angry music telling them to RIOT... then what?

Meanwhile other anarchists are working against violence – both in the anarchist scene and in other organisations – and pacifist anarchists explicitly renounce violence. But too often these people have felt marginalised in the anarchist scene that accepts violent imagery and fails to denounce violence.

We have violence within our community. Men bashing women, men bashing other men, people of both genders attacking complete strangers for being 'sexist' or 'fascist', the violence of our language, our self-policing of 'anarchist correctness', the unspoken hierarchies, bullying and intimidation. These are all common and often acceptable behaviour within our community.

Is this really okay? Will this paradox undo our attempts to dismantle a violent hierarchical society and will we simply become what we despise? Are you comfortable with the level of violence in your life? How would you feel if a friend of yours was hospitalised by other so-called anarchists? If a friend was sexually abused by an anarchist? Would your stance change at all?

Where does the solution lie? In justice?

(In)justice in society

In Aotearoa, crime rates are falling and yet this country has the second highest incarceration rate in the world. The police seem as likely to be the perpetrators of violence as gang members, and sentencing is based more on your class and race than the crimes you have committed.

While lip service is given to restorative justice the reality is that the whole system relies on the threat of punitive justice. This approach's failure is shown by the USA's high rates of both capital punishment and murders and by the high re-offending rates by former prisoners in New Zealand. In fact, it would appear that the best the establishment can come up with is to threaten people with one of the most dangerous and violent environments in New Zealand – prison. This seems little threat to those who thrive on violence.

Prevention is better than cure

Is there an antidote for violence? As a start we must work to educate each other and prevent violence from manifesting. Prevention is about reducing the likelihood that people use violence in the first place by challenging the beliefs, values and discourses that support violence and by challenging the power relations that promote and are maintained by violence.

It is rare for violence to be challenged within the anarchist scene. It is common for people to not talk about it, saying 'oh, it's a personal thing', or 'who knows who started it' or 'we don't want to wrongly accuse someone'.

People tend to blame one person without holding them responsible or supporting the other person. There is little acknowledgement of a pattern of abuse that needs to end.

There are lots of things we can do to prevent violence. Talking can help a lot. Whether it is with a friend, lover or lonely stranger it is important to talk about what is acceptable behaviour and what we are comfortable with. It can be the hardest to talk to our close friends, but often it is those we love the most that we hurt the

most. We can share our ideas on how to prevent violence and defend ourselves, and work on naming and eliminating the violence in our relationships.

If you witness an act of violence it is important to speak out against it. In order to do this safely we need communities that will support the denunciation of violence.

It is also important that the perpetrators of violence are made accountable. If someone will acknowledge their violence, the first step towards justice has been taken. The survivors of abuse should determine their own course towards justice. They should never be further disempowered by pressure to do one thing or another.

Bear in mind that going to the police is not viable for a lot of anarchists. Would you go to the police because you were assaulted? What if the police had assaulted you?

When we don't want to call a cop

The NZ Crime Survey (2001) found that only two-fifths of people who were the victims of crime had reported that crime to the police. For violent crime, out of 816,000 incidents reported in the survey, police statistics only showed 39,000 incidents for the same period.

Anarchists don't want to call the police and, unsurprisingly, neither do most New Zealanders. So then what?

It is intolerable that anyone might think they can attack our community (or members of it) with impunity, but if we are hesitant to seek redress through the (in)justice system, then we need to look to alternative models.

There are only rare examples of anarchist justice for us to learn from. This lack of experience and experimentation in community justice has left us with a serious problem.

There is a real need to start addressing our internal violence and learning how to deal with violence from outside our communities. Our local anarchist community has not established any form of anarchist justice so we need to start a dialogue. How should we react to attacks on our community? How can we deal with violence in a non-violent way?

We can look at global ideas and examples. Crime and various other social problems within communities could be settled by those communities, and not through hierarchical and outside institutions such as the police or the state. Maori have had their own criminal justice system. A system based on social responsibilities that linked people to their wider community. At the heart of this system was the recognition that everybody had a responsibility to the wider community. Important too, was the belief that all people had a tapu which was not to be abused by others. Community-based systems of self-policing and security, with a rotating membership drawn from the immediate community, and supervised by the wider community, have been operating successfully within Zapatista communities — their Indigenous Community Police. They report that crime has gone down significantly, organised crime has almost disappeared and police corruption is non-existent.

So while we can find indigenous examples of successful community justice it is important that we organise our own systems of justice rather than copying/appropriating other peoples' methods that might not be suited to us. For this to happen we must first begin to talk. Anarchists hope that a society that lacks private property will by default eliminate the majority of crime and leave 'social crimes' (violence, murder, rape, etc.) to be confronted by changing the nature of society, helping survivors, and finding ways of preventing repeat offending.

An anarchist justice system could mean that offenders would not be punished but justice achieved by the teaching and healing of all involved. Public condemnation of the wrongdoing might be a key aspect of this process, but the wrong doer would remain part of the community and see the effects of their actions on others in terms of the grief and pain they have caused. They would be expected to try and make amends for their act by helping victims and their families.

In a social arrangement that is truly in the best interest of each participating individual, exclusion from the community should be threat enough to discourage violent or destructive behaviour. It is certainly a more humanitarian approach than prisons and executions. Those who refuse to integrate themselves into any community and reject community justice or assistance and generosity of others may find themselves banished from human interaction.

Unfortunately, at the moment we only have a weak threat of exclusion from the narrow anarchist community, and this limits the effectiveness of restorative justice when the offender is basically free to move on to other communities.

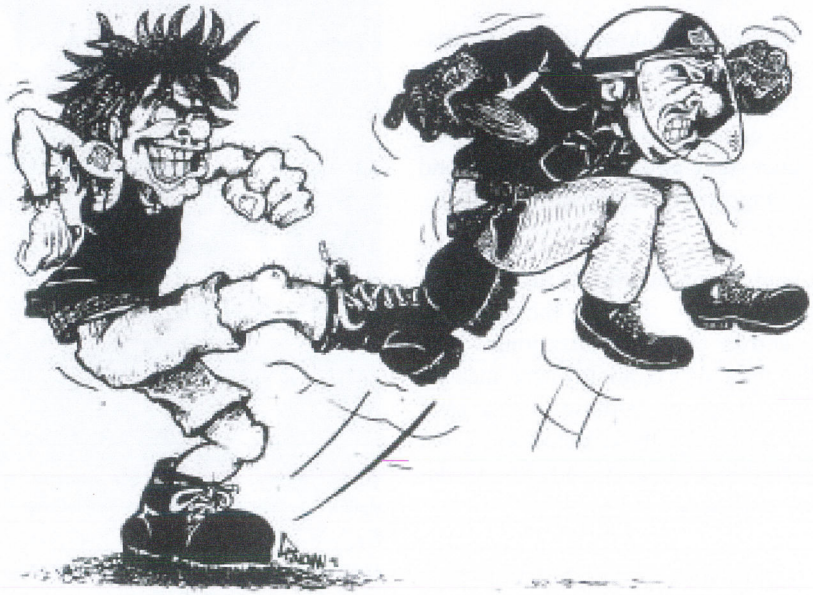
We can't wait for an anarchist utopia. In our current circumstances, how do we hold each other accountable? And what's more – as it doesn't look like the police or National Front are likely to subject themselves to anarchist justice – how do we deal with violence from outside our community? Something needs to start happening now.

The end bit

This article was instigated because of an attack on someone within our community. It probably shouldn't have taken an incident like this for us to start this discussion.

Is violence an issue within our community? Do we roll over and accept its skulking presence? Or do we, as a community, want to address the problem? Do we set up restorative justice processes and start taking appointments?

Will we have to wait for another of our friends to get bashed over or abused in some way, for the answer to these questions to become urgent?@@@



Thoughts on politics, policing, work and the activist community

By Hannah Ho

Small anarchist collective engaged in typically thoughtful discourse.

I THOUGHT we could start with a bit of advice from our friend Mr. Michael Jackson:

"I'm starting with the man in the mirror
I'm asking him to change his ways
And no message coulda been any clearer
If you wanna make the world a better place
Take a look at yourself and make a change"

As much as I love to diss out 'the system" (*down with the system man! But can you leave my dole and the water on*) I thought I'd share some of my thoughts and concerns about the Wellington activist community.

So here's, briefly, something on policing, challenge and 'the revolution'.

What is this amorphous thing called the Wellington activist community?

To us who identify as Wellington-based activists, there often doesn't appear to be a coherent community with a list of who's in it. But to outsiders, we have a visible solid community. Natural drainage flows have been put forward as a reason for cohesion, as many activists, like water, tumble down the hills and end up at the Oblong internet café or 128 community house.

People do actually move to Wellington because of the apparent cohesion and centrality of the activist community. Partly because there are congregating and central places like 128 and Oblong, and that if you walk around long enough you can find the whereabouts of most people.

Fuck fuck fuck the po-lice! Or rather fuck policing and how we do it to ourselves and each other.

There are un-talked about dress codes; how much black one wears, how much of your clothes are secondhand, or even better, dumpstered, who's wearing what and how many patches. Then there's un-talked about activist codes that people must meet and then score a percentage on how 'good' an activist they are. Or better yet whether they're a 'real…' (insert label i.e. activist, anarchist, feminist).

'I squat' (*paying rent is for losers*).

'He works full time' (*100 points off capitalist wage slave!*).

'I'm a full time activist' (*I'm on the dole or have a trust fund or income from rent*).

'I'm so busy I have a meeting on every night of the week.'

'Well I have one every night and two on the weekend' (*people who don't go to lots of meetings aren't real activists, the more meetings you attend is a mark of how dedicated and real you are).*

'If you don't agree with the need for violence to start the revolution then you're just bloody liberals!'

'Fucken middle class bourgeois academic capitalist wanker suits' (*can I borrow $20 mum? And can you go halves on this house with me and make sure my trust fund payments are going through? Hmmm…I might go overseas this year).*

'They're monogamous' (*they're so conservative*).

'Cars are bad, I hate cars' (*can you give me a lift home?).*

These issues should be talked about.

Many of us are middle class with trust funds, property, exclusive relationships, cars, jobs and rich parents. Wages, housing, transport, the nature of our relationships and violence, are issues that affect many of us and need to be discussed. But it should be talked about openly and constructively. Not behind peoples backs, or in a really 'I'm right you're wrong' manner.

Which brings me to the topic of this challenge. How do we do it? It's easy to stand

outside parliament and yell and scream. It's easy to rark up the cops and turn up our noses at the suits on Lambton Quay. It's not so easy to say to someone in our communities that we see round all the time, but don't really know well: "Hey that's really fucked, that thing you did the other day". Or "I love you, you're my mate, but you're behaving like a complete arsehole".

I think it's real hard to do this, because for all the analyses about the myriads of oppression, inequalities and power plays, often we've learnt, and learnt how to talk about these things in the abstract, in books and text, often void of emotion and personal interaction. So I know a bit about colonisation, slavery, exploitation, racism, white supremacy, patriarchy, violence against queer and transgender peoples, ableism, ageism, but how do I talk to my mum about it. Or my boss, my coworker, my uncle. Many of us just don't, and we think of our families as lost causes.

So how do I respectfully and constructively challenge the black lower class, transgender, non-monogamous lesbian in the wheelchair, deaf with one arm and a speech impediment, on her irresponsible behaviour in meetings and her abusiveness in intimate relationships?

Well here's my answer. I don't. I let her disrupt the group and fuck over my mates. I feel shit about it, so I talk about colonisation, racism, class, non-monogamy and the patriarchy. I go have a protest at some embassy and yell at a cop while waiting for the revolution to start.

'The revolution'

(drum roll and trumpets please)

OK. So 'the revolution' has been happening for thousands of years. It's usually just us youngies, and us people that get to choose whether we want to engage consciously or not, who think it's revolving too bloody slow and some guns ought to speed it up a bit and get it 'really' started. So yeah, pretty patronizing for all those that have gone before all over the world, as well as those who continue to struggle in ways I'm too far up my own righteous arse to comprehend.

Anyway, back home to the Wellington activist community. With the policing we do to each other, and the lack of respectful and constructive challenge, what is our revolution (that hasn't started yet) gonna look like?

Because of what I see as a lot of knee jerk "I-have-to-do-it-right-now-'cos-no-one-else-will" stuff, combined with disrespect and a lack of respectful constructive challenge. Top that off with "if you don't agree with me about the necessity for armed revolt/veganism/non-monogamy, then you're just a bloody liberal and you don't get to be part of our revolution". There might not actually be many people 'in the revolution'. It also starts to look and sound like any other fascist fundy crew, that plans to have a massive party, but anyone that doesn't agree with them doesn't get to come.

So the revolution, huh. The revolution could be thought of as a concept. A concept we're working towards. One problem with how I feel our Wellington activist community works, is just that. Work. That it's just Work. That meetings=activism.

That in our compartmentalised, dislocated modern world, activism needs a name, Its name is Work, something we do, rather than something we live.

So if activism is work, then many of us are chronic workaholics. And the harder you work, the sicker you get and the more you burn, the more dedicated and real an activist you are. It reminds me a bit of rugby culture in Aotearoa. One of the legends in rugby history is Buck Shelford. Buck is playing rugby and gets half his ball sack ripped off during a test. So what does he do? He tapes it back on, I shit you not, and continues to play.

I read somewhere this old guy saying about activism "I've got a 20 year commitment to it (activism) so I can afford to take a break." And this is something I was thinking about. That probably anyone who calls themselves an activist, has a long-term commitment to changing things. I don't reckon any of us think "Oh, I'm just doing this for a few years, then I'm going to climb the corporate ladder, only read Women's Weekly, FHM and TV Week, and buy an SUV to go off road once a year during my annual leave".

So, if we've got a long-term commitment to our value systems and doing this stuff, then why are we working harder than we'd expect someone in a poor country or a factory to work? Why are some of us so fucken sick and still working and others so sick and burnt that we do have to leave? And why are we policing and censoring each other when that's what we are supposedly resisting? And why do we spout on about oppression, exploitation and disrespect, but run a mile rather than confront one of our crew about it?

For me the answer is this. That I'm guilty of everything I've just ranted on about. Because I've had the luxury to see activism as something to Do, as Work, as a Choice, not something that is lived, that so many people live. Because it's been easier to bitch and police each other, than challenge each other and get into the nitty

The aftermath of a normal day at work in the capitalist system.

It doesn't have to be all hard work and no play in the anarchist collective.

gritty hard work and commitment of respectfully and constructively challenging one of our own. Because it's easier to go yell at parliament, yell at Mobil and rark up the cops, than to see how we're treating each other. Because it's easy to diss out 'the system' and critique and deconstruct everything, rather than construct and create and put energy into something, regardless of what some idiot corporation, government or person is doing. Also because it scares me. If the community and society I want to happen, does happen, it means taking everyone along, or at least inviting them to the party.

Which means talking to your racist grandma, your landowning father. Working something out with the dairy farmers, the National voters, the liberal feminists, the social democrats, the capitalists, the bourgeoisie and the politicians.

Because if we don't, and we just kill those people or exile them, we start to look very much like the Khmer Rouge, Communist China, Nazi Germany and our good friends the National Front. And it's hard to comprehend, 'cos if we can't front each other, challenge each other respectfully, creatively and constructively, then we don't have a shit hope with National-voter farmer Joe, or Jane "I want to be CEO of Mobil for women's rights'.

I guess I put out this challenge to myself and to everyone in our amorphous communities because I reckon we got a good thing going here. There is some amazing shit going on, incredible things have been achieved. Not only have we opposed the bad shit going on, but we have also created alternatives to the bad shit.

We have created a community that we can draw strength from (even if we do bitch and moan about each other sometimes). And even though I don't know most of you that well, I feel like the Welly activist posse has my back.

So big ups all, and I challenge us because I don't want us to burn and continue to burn each other in that process. I want to still be doing this work in 30, 40, 50 years, and I want to be rocking in those rocking chairs with yous. But we won't be, if the manner in which many of us conduct ourselves continues.

So that's my two cents worth. Let's look at the policing and censoring of each other in the Wellington activist community. Let's openly talk about privilege, how to use it and learn to live honestly with our contradictions. Let's to learn how to challenge each other respectfully and constructively. Let's start to try to look at activism as a way we want to live, and 'the revolution' as ways to ask people along to the party@@@

SUBVERTISEMENT

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Talking tactics

IN campaign planning, I frequently feel at a loss to identify the right moment for any one particular type of action. I also feel the campaign involvement I have had has suffered from a lack of a de-briefing process or any real analysis of the successes and failures of particular actions.

By Valerie Morse

With this in mind, I wanted to write this to start a discussion about strategy and tactics – the what, when, how and where of actions. This is not a critique though clearly that, too, is necessary. Rather it is an attempt to identify useful tactics or tools that have been used in actions by way of three specific examples: the first example is the anti-fascist fairies that appeared in October 2004, the second example is the Peace Action campaign against the weapons conference in 2005, and the third example is the anti-cop rape protests following the verdict in the Clint Rickards rape trial in 2006.

In 2004, the right wing fascist party, the National Front, publicly organised a pro-flag demonstration at the Cenotaph just outside Parliament Buildings in Wellington. This demonstration followed closely on the desecration of a number of Jewish headstones in two separate graveyards in Wellington, and the brutal attack of a young Somali man by a group of white supremacists in the Wellington suburb of Newtown.

PHOTO: INDYMEDIA

Police make an arret atthe weapon's conference demo.

In response, a broad coalition of community groups and activists came together under the banner 'Multicultural Aotearoa' to organise a counter-demonstration celebrating diversity and tolerance. The demonstration was planned to arrive at Parliament but was not planned to confront the fascists.

A number of anarchists wanted to support the campaign but felt that the fascists needed to be confronted more directly. Some felt that marching was simply not enough either to express their disgust at fascism or to display their willingness to actively stop fascist organising.

The anti-fascist fairies were a response that seemed to suit the situation for a number of reasons: first the fairies were a physical challenge to the fascists simply by their presence, second, they challenged the pseudo-ceremonial nature of the fascists gathering by mocking it in a playful way, third, the participation of both male and female fairies highlighted the ridiculous machismo culture of white supremacists. Finally, from a tactical point of view, the fairies were able to be part of a larger campaign while remaining autonomous and operating with a different consensus about what action was acceptable than the larger march.

In this case, both the on-going media coverage about the fascists' crimes as well as the multicultural march itself were vehicles for doing really successful anarchist anti-fascist action. Not only were the fascists routed, so to speak, at the Railway Station, but the media portrayal of the fairies was largely positive. The anti-fascist information gathering is on-going but action is largely limited to reactionary activity. Obviously, this could be shifted, but at present there is not a broad consensus on the need for more active anti-fa activity.

The second example is blockade of the Defence Industry Association conference held at Te Papa on 18–19 October 2005. Peace Action Wellington had specifically undertaken to raise awareness of the true nature of the conference with the public. In the six months prior to the conference, members of Peace Action had done regular stalls, pickets, petition-signature gatherings and public meetings. The group approached Te Papa and asked that the conference venue to be cancelled, and when rebuffed, it sought intervention from the Minister of Arts, Culture and Heritage, Helen Clark, on the basis that the hosting of a weapons conference violated the institution's founding legislation

to be 'a place that all New Zealanders can be proud of...'

While the regular membership of Peace Action is relatively small, the issues on which it campaigns enjoys wide support in the community. A march from Civic Square to the entrance of Te Papa was planned and advertised. The intention was to encourage mass action for which no prior knowledge or participation was required. People who convened at the start of the march were told that a sit-in blockade was planned and that they were invited to participate. This tactic was chosen because the nature of the entrance and security made alternative blockading techniques impractical or impossible (the entranceway spans over 60 metres with five separate sets of doors).

The site was scouted on the morning of the demonstration and barricades were in place at the entrance, although it was unclear if they were intended to 'cattle' in the protest.

A large group of people turned out as part of the 'Clown Army' on the opening day of the conference. Again, this particular characterisation, borrowed from activists in the UK, was to highlight the ridiculous nature of a weapons conference and more broadly, of militarisation and war. With contractors such as Lockheed Martin and Kellogg, Brown and Root (a part of the Halliburton empire) – both of which actively participate in the farcical horror called the 'war on terrorism' – present at the conference, the clowns really hit home. In full makeup and camouflage clothing they were also conveniently difficult to recognise, making it more difficult for police identification.

The blockade lasted some three hours before police began summarily arresting people. As tension escalated, more arrests resulted. A re-positioning of the blockade in front of an armoured vehicle attempting to exit the museum further delayed (and dismayed) conference proceedings.

In all, there were 20 arrests. Of those, 14 people were immediately dismissed with no charge. The other six were charged with a variety of minor offences and at the time of writing, not a single conviction has been obtained by the police.

The activities continued over the next day as noise brigades outside the museum and hotel conference dinner further disrupted their planned events. Some other sabbing occurred in and around the museum.

There were a number of reasons that this demo was a success. First, Peace Action had a clearly enunciated campaign goal and concentrated its efforts on a single, easily understandable point. The demo itself was reactionary, but overall the campaign was pro-active (or preventative, if you like).

PHOTO: INDYMEDIA

Fascists gathering at Wellington's cenotaph are vanquished by a hail of fairy dust!

Members did good work in telling people about the conference and got lucky with an extremely favorable front page article in the *Wellingtonian* newspaper prior to the event. It organised the actual demo in a way that people could participate in while allowing them to define their own particular comfort level. Moreover, it did not require the commitment of people's time and energy before or after the demo, although certainly that would have been welcome. Finally, media coverage of both the blockade and subsequent events was positive.

The final example is of the anarcha-feminist actions surrounding the verdict delivered in the rape trial of Clint Rickards, Bob Schollum and Brad Shipton.

In brief, these three former police officers were acquitted of the gang-rape of a woman in Rotorua in the 1980s. Two of these men are currently serving time for the gang rape of another woman. This information, however, was suppressed and kept from the jury.

The acquittal was seen by many women in the anarchist community (and much, much more broadly as we were soon to learn) as a grave travesty of justice. We were angry, horrified and saddened. We were also deeply concerned about the ability of rape survivors to get justice in this country, particularly when the accused are police officers. An emergency-response meeting had been planned for the day the verdict was delivered. We met and discussed our feelings, and our ideas for actions. Fortuitously, we discovered that the police were hosting an open day at the Police College in Porirua the next day. This was the first time in five years that such an event was being held.

The Saturday newspapers covered the story with the usual endorsement of the

status quo. The character of the woman victim was again assassinated. The cost of the trial to the public was lamented. The credibility of women was wholly questioned.

Our demonstration at the Police College captured the media's attention and was given extensive coverage on nightly news, radio and in the following days newspapers. It was a silent vigil in which we affirmed that we believed *her,* regardless of what the judge, jury or media was telling us.

The decision by several women to break the name suppression order further encouraged not only media interest, but much broader public interest and support. Literally hundreds of people stopped at the daily vigil to get and give information, to share horror stories of police brutality and rape and to give money for the campaign.

The success of this campaign and specifically of these actions was two-fold. First, it was an excellent vehicle for our outrage. Sometimes this is necessary for our own sanity. Further, this campaign captured the media's attention which meant public discussion ceased to be about how much this cost and how these men were acquitted and became about what the jury did NOT know.

No action or campaign is flawless. However, anarchists in Wellington have done much good work, and by identifying some of the specific ways in which these actions have worked, it is my hope that we can consolidate and further our knowledge.

The first action used both existing media attention on the subject and a large organised event to support a smaller, autonomous action for its success. The second example worked by longer-term public campaigning, a broad support base and a clear, finite goal to carry out a successful action.

The third example worked successfully by reacting quickly to the situation and re-focusing the already existing media attention on the story.

Clearly, campaign strategy and tactics are at best a bit of planning, a bit of art and a bit of luck. They are almost always infused with our passion. These examples outline three different tactical paths in action planning. Sometimes we don't consciously choose what we do or how we approach an action, but are guided by instinct and emotion.

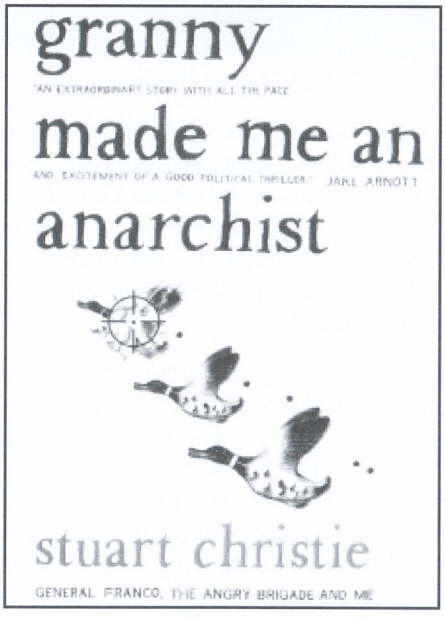
When we can meld our thoughts and feelings, our rational and intuitive, our actions will be stronger and gain broader public support and understanding @@@

This article was inspired by an article entitled *Demonstrating Resistance: Mass Action and Autonomous Action in the Election Year: An analysis of the successes and failures of recent militant demonstrations* on the Crimethinc website. It can be found at *http://www.crimethinc.com/features/10.html*

Book Review

Don't argue with your grandma

Christie, S., *Granny Made Me an Anarchist*, London, 2004, pp. 423, ISBN: 0-7432-6356-1
Reviewed by Barrie Sargeant



BRITAIN has never had a huge anarchist movement. Anarchists there can not boast of organisations numbering hundreds of thousands or lay claim to instigating a revolution. However, it would be wrong to say Britain has never had any movement. Nor is Britain itself simply the bastion of the contented cucumber sandwich-eating, cricket playing, warm beer-drinking chaps and semi-detached-owning docile neo-peasants of establishment mythology. Adding a healthy corrective to the latter view, and doing a lot more as well, is this autobiography by Stuart Christie.

Stuart Christie might not be well known to activists now. However, his assassination attempt against right-wing Spanish dictator Francisco Franco, made him probably the most famous British anarchist of the 1960s and 70s. His book is wonderfully written, sometimes funny but also bristling with serious political commitment. The book is divided chronologically into three parts, each with a simple title.

The first 'Glasgow', looks at Christie's upbringing from birth there to departure for Spain aged eighteen. The author treats us to a vibrant account of life in a Scottish city in the 1950's "...a time before deep fried Mars bars, curried mutton pies and urban blight set in"[1]. It was a place divided by class differences, religious sectarianism and political rivalries. More positively, the local culture revered a history of rent strikes, radical miners and volunteers for the 1936 revolution in Spain.

Though the title gives the ultimate credit for Christie's anarchism to his gran, his descriptions of this Glaswegian social crucible indicate it was more complex than that. He charts his involvement in the Boy Scouts and Orange Order. Then comes disillusionment with Labour Party hacks, annoyance at Trotskyist power freaks and sell-out union bosses, and talks with anarchist librarians. Also deftly weaving its way through the personal narrative are developments such as the Cuban Missile Crisis and the rise of TV. It is a panorama that does as good a job as any of explaining how somebody becomes an anarchist.

The second part, 'Spain', looks at the assassination attempt. The authorities had infiltrated the resistance and had well developed surveillance. Christie's efforts were an abject failure. It would be tempting for him to portray himself in a heroic light and downplay the fiasco, but

Christie brings a commendable self-criticism to the episode. He admits smuggling explosives under a sweater in summer, not speaking Spanish and ignoring the risk of disaster, were acts of an adolescent. Christie acknowledges that with hindsight he would probably not repeat the experience.

It is not hard though, to sympathise with his anger at injustice and the need for personal action. In the most powerfully succinct sentence of the book the writer explains "I wanted to change the world because the world needed to be changed".[2]

The remainder of the section following the arrest describes police procedures and life during the three years spent in prison in Spain.

Prison memoirs are a genre that can leave the reader feeling a sense of *deja vu,* after reading a few. There are such moments in this book too, with brutal wardens, obnoxious priests and ostracised gays, for example. However, the account is saved by anecdotes adding a distinct local flavour. The best concerns a recidivist bagpipe player who would jump into bullrings, push the matador aside and begin bellowing the banned Galician national anthem! The greatest value of this section is not the prison stories themselves, but the way they highlight that opposition to Franco continued long after the end of the civil war in 1939. This is the date at which most conventional histories close. In fact, resistance continued up to the dictator's death in 1975. Christie has done well in recording this reality.

The final part, 'London', centres on Christie's arrest for supposed involvement in bombings by the Angry Brigade. The Angry Brigade was a group that issued communiqués and carried out actions in Britain in the 1970s. Again the author provides a wider context for the deeds of the group, showing they did not operate in a social vacuum. The left was on the rise globally in response to the American war in Vietnam and other conflicts. Britain was affected by this but Christie stresses the election of a government intent on introducing a vicious Industrial Relations Bill as a central catalyst for the founding of the brigade. The state's intelligence agencies, police and the media all contributed to a climate of hysteria that lead to the rounding up of suspects. After the longest British trial of the twentieth century, Christie was acquitted.

He writes about the trauma of this time, making telling comparisons between conditions in Spanish and British prisons and showing the maliciousness of cops, against a backdrop of widespread unrest. This is all well told.

The only criticism to make is the mentioning of a partner named Brenda. No detail is given as to how, where or when they met, what her activities were or anything else. Christie would have done better to provide these details rather than risk charges of a latent sexism in his chronicle.

I can recommend this book as a great read for anyone interested in political autobiographies, prison memoirs or those who want a feel for the *zeitgeist* of late twentieth century Britain.

Most of all this is a work for anyone feeling, as Stuart Christie did upon becoming an anarchist, that "The state, the oligarchic institutional means by which society is governed, controlled and ultimately repressed, was clearly the enemy; if we did not destroy it first, it would destroy us".[3]

Acknowledgements

Thanks to Lyn, Ross and S@m for material assistance with this review.

Recommended Reading

Bratach Dubh, *The Angry Brigade*, London, 1978

Hodgart, R.M., *Ethel MacDonald Glasgow Woman Anarchist*, London, 199?

Meltzer, A., *I Couldn't Paint Golden Angels*, Edinburgh, 1996

Quail, J., *The Slow Burning Fuse: The Lost History of the British Anarchists*, London, 1978

Tellez, A., *The Anarchist Resistance to Franco*, London, 1994

Tellez, A., *Sabate: Guerrilla Extraordinary*, (Trans, Christie, S.), Edinburgh, 1998.

Notes

1 Christie, p. 8
2 Christie, p. 120
3 Christie, p.76

Hawaiian Music

Ukeular energy from the Pacific's musical royalty

King Bennie Nawahi: Hawaiian String Virtuoso

Yazoo Records 2055

Reviewed by Barrie Sargeant

Hawaiian music is bland electrified kitsch, right? Some of it is. There is also impressive musicianship to discover.

A good starting point is this acoustic compilation from 1920s multi-instrumentalist and singer King Bennie Nawahi. Bennie was a ukulele master (hence 'King'), playing frenetically and performing tricks. He also does slow *hapa haole*/half foreign ballads on the steel guitar, producing sweet sounds. There are novelty tunes, hot jazz and country numbers too. Nawahi's virtuosity is evident throughout, the re-mastering is excellent and the notes provide interesting biographical material. Prepare to be amazed.

Sol Hoopii: Master of the Hawaiian Guitar Vol 1

Rounder Records 1024

Reviewed by Barrie Sargeant

The most influential Hawaiian Steel guitarist is Sol Hoopii, whose career spanned many decades. This collection has an eclectic coverage of genres, with an overview of his 1920s output. It shows responses to the period, with a playing tone based on jazz clarinettists. There is nevertheless plenty of straight Hawaiian material, the alterations in tempo and flavourings, showcasing his formidable talents. The aural quality is inevitably patchy, given the vintage of the recordings, but Hoopii's playing shines through. This is an essential disk.

Anarchonomics

Regular rant

Lost in the supermarket

***Sam Buchanan* reckons today's activists spend a lot of time worrying about what they consume and sometimes forget to change the way things are produced.**

Class society isn't about some people being richer than others, or, in other words, being able to consume more. Class is about the power some people gain by owning the means of production – the tools, land, factories, transport networks and everything else needed to produce stuff – and treating other people as just another resource to be mined.

At times some sections of the working class, those with the skills in demand at the time, can be financially well off. They are able to consume a great deal, but still have nothing to sell but their labour. The power to dictate *how* things are produced is held by the ruling class.

Much of anarchism is a theory of how society should organise the production of things. This can get a bit lost when production of material things isn't currently a big part of people's lives.

Modern capitalism focuses on what you consume rather than what you produce. When you've grown up in a rich capitalist city or suburb, where most jobs are in a state or private bureaucracy, or in services, production may seem distant and even unimportant. Many people's lives are unconnected with production of things, but everybody consumes. And in this sort of society consumption is easier to assert control over than production.

It's easy to focus ones political energies on consumption – what to wear, eat, use and buy – and hope that this will influence what or how things are produced. Of course, to believe that, you have to buy into the myth that production is dictated by the decisions of consumers – the great free-market fantasy. But while nobody actually stands over you and forces you to buy something, consumers don't get to make free decisions. In a capitalist society regulations, large corporations squeezing out the competition, monopolies, limitations on people's time, low wages and the need to own an increasing number of things just to function 'normally' all conspire against choice.

Say you want a tomato and cheese toasted sandwich, with lots of pepper (yum!). Except that the small takeaway that used to be there has closed down after Burger King opened next door – backed by a zillion dollar advertising budget, an ability to pay a higher rent, enough clout with suppliers to get its materials at a discount, and the money to invest in the expensive technology necessary for the mass-production that makes their product cheaper. In some countries, there'd be a street stall selling sandwiches, but the council doesn't allow them here. You could go to the place in the cheap end of town that's still in business, but the company that has a monopoly on bus services has put its prices up and you aren't allowed to ride a bike unless you've bought a helmet and lights. And anyway, you have to be back at work in 20 minutes, and damn, your cell phone that you had to buy so the job agency could call you is ringing and now you've only got 15 minutes to find something to eat, so bugger it, you'll just buy whatever is convenient which isn't what you actually wanted and you know all that packaging is environmentally damaging, but there's no point giving it back 'cos they are just going to throw it away…

That's how choice works in the free-market. It can't force you to buy something – but it can make your life very difficult if you refuse.

That's not to say that reducing your consumption is a bad idea – avoiding goods produced in particularly environmentally destructive or anti-worker methods certainly is a good thing to do. Curtailing consumption might even make you happier, but it's a limited form of action.

To mount a consumer boycott you have to be a consumer in the first place.

Generally speaking, capitalism doesn't care much what you consume, so long as you do – and so long as they profit from it. It's when people start taking production into their own hands and raising the spectre of a population that doesn't need capitalism that the capitalists get all jittery and nervous.

Consumption has its joys, but for most of us producing something has deeper ones. For example, the satisfaction of cooking a meal yourself outweighs eating out – assuming you aren't rushed, tired, overworked and stressed in which it becomes a bloody pain and a pizza from the takeaway down the road might seem a great idea. Maybe cooking isn't your thing, but all of us (I hope), find pleasure and satisfaction in doing something ourselves.

Capitalism even trades on this. It steals the satisfaction gained from a task well done and puts it to its service as "pride in your job". Then it takes away the joy of producing things for yourself and your community by keeping you tired and overworked and making the option of handing over a few dollars to get somebody else to produce what you want feel like a great idea.

Capitalism's reward for good service is always more consumption. Do a good job and maybe we'll give you more money. Never more time to laze around or do things yourself. Many people might like to work less and enjoy more, but that offer is rarely on the table – the usual reward on offer is more consumption, i.e. money. The result is that even capitalism's winners can't figure out why they're still depressed.

Anarchists need to help people produce the goods and services they want, in a way that doesn't take over and destroy their lives. We don't want to join in with the social democrats' disempowering charity model of helping people by helping them buy and sell more. Or join the authoritarian pastel greenies' model of dictating to people what they should be consuming and pretending that the world would change if the stupid masses just acted like us enlightened saints (with our dual fuel Toyota Priuses).

For the sake of the planet, and for the sake of the people who slave away their lives to produce things, we need to be tearing down the uber-consumers with their corporate jets and swimming pools, but production is the real issue.

The cakes capitalism bakes suck,and the way they are made sucks, but that shouldn't put us off cake. Change the way we produce things, share the bakery, and we can all have our slice of the cake – and even the time to relax under a shady tree and eat it.

Commemorating Murray Bookchin

By Melisa Ak

WHEN Murray Bookchin, 85, passed away on July 30, 2006, one of his close friends, scholar Brian Tokar wrote an article on zmagazine.org with the title: Loss of a Visionary Social Theorist and Activist.

Bookchin had the ability and perspective to see the potentialities of social changes sometimes half a century beforehand. He was not only a social theorist, but also an activist since the age of nine. He left 20 books and hundreds of articles. His books were translated into Italian, German, Spanish, Japanese, Turkish and many other languages.

My partner and I had a chance to meet Bookchin for an interview during the summer school at the Social Ecology Institute (ISE) in Vermont, US in 2000. It was very exciting for us, because we had been following in his footprints for couple of years. We had established a discussion group based on his ideas and thoughts to adapt them to our home country, Turkey, and another reading and discussion group in Australia.

When we met him five years ago his health situation was not good, he was hardly walking and could not write – but his memory was brilliant! He was still participating in some meetings and teachings at ISE and he was about to finish his third volume of (one of his latest books), *The Third Revolution*.

He enjoyed telling his childhood memories. He was raised in a working class Russian migrant activist family in the Bronx during the 1920s and '30s. Bookchin told us how he learned English while he was playing with other migrant kids under the Brooklyn Bridge.

He also said that all that area was not built-up and still had vast green fields with many trees. He liked to share his hiking memories. Apparently he became passionate to protect natural environment at a young age. He headed a communist youth in New Jersey, for a while flirting with Trotskyism, then he published *Our Synthetic Environment* in 1962 and wrote *Crisis in Our Cities* in 1965.

Being from a working class family, he and his family suffered economic hardship most of the time. His parents were factory workers. His memory of his mother and aunties was especially interesting to me. He said that after the so-called *Black Monday* 1929 economic crisis his family struggled to survive. They could not pay the rent for their flat, lost their jobs and his family was kicked out from the apartment. Then his mother and his aunties worked together in order to survive. I do not remember what he said about his dad, but he kept telling of the solidarity between wimmin in his family and in his community. Russian migrants helped each other to survive during the crisis.

George Bush was newly elected when we visited, Bookchin was deeply concerned for the future of America and for the world. He underlined that we were at the threshold of a wicked epoch, saying that this is the worst American president ever. We were even trying to make a joke like "probably it will accelerate the social changes in the world". He also foresaw the results of Israel's Zionism, having Jewish heritage. Probably Bookchin's heart couldn't resist long to see America's occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq and what Israel is doing in Palestine and in Lebanon at the moment.

Our conversation was directed towards the history and herstory in Turkey and in the Middle East in general and also wimmin's situation in ancient Greece. One of his passions was to analyse, research and write on the direct democracy experience of the ancient Greeks.

He reflected his remarkable thoughts and analysis about the roots of hierarchies in his wonderful holistic book (based on earth science and anthropology), *The Ecology of Freedom*.

Bookchin showed us his giant library. When he took us to his study he said "this is my steel workshop", mentioning his labour years at a steel factory.

Tokar summarised his fruitful life:

"Bookchin had a very prolific life and a career of writing, teaching and political activism that spanned half a century, forged a new anti-authoritarian outlook rooted in ecology, dialectical philosophy and left libertarianism. A self-educated scholar and public intellectual, Bookchin served as a full professor at Ramapo College of New Jersey despite his own lack of conventional academic credentials.

"His introduction to anarchism was by veterans of the immigrant labour movement during the 1950s. In 1974, he co-founded the Institute for Social Ecology, along with Dan Chodorkoff, then a graduate student at Vermont's Goddard College. For 30 years, the Institute for Social Ecology has brought thousands of students to Vermont for intensive educational programs focusing on the theory and praxis of social ecology."

He must have been excited to see social changes when the global justice movement started in Seattle in 1999. He went to the streets of Seattle in his wheelchair. During our visit to ISE we saw a photo exhibition, watched documentaries and heard about their experiences at Seattle.

He was critical of tendencies toward mysticism and misanthropy in the radical

environmental movement, and the growing focus on individualism and personal lifestyles among 1990s anarchists.

Tokar writes again:

"In the late 1990s, Bookchin broke with anarchism, the political tradition he had been most identified with for over 30 years and articulated a new political vision that he called communalism... During the past year, even while terminally ill in Burlington, Bookchin was working toward a re-evaluation of what he perceived as the historic failure of the 20th century left. He argued that Marxist crisis theory failed to recognize the inherent flexibility and malleability of capitalism, and that Marx never saw capitalism in its true contemporary sense. Until his death, Bookchin asserted that only the ecological problems created by modern capitalism were of sufficient magnitude to portend the system's demise."

His influence was often cited by prominent political and social activists throughout the US, Europe, South America, Turkey, Japan, and beyond.

I believe that his influence will be long lasting in the political movement and his ideas will lead us to build a libertarian ecological society @@@

The Beginner's Guide to Russians

By Tina McIvor

DELVING into the *his*tory of various Russian anarchist figures is an epoch journey which I recently experienced from the comfort of a lazy-boy chair. Here are six sketches of colourful figures that offer a level of intrigue and adventure along the road of this particular anarchist *his*tory.

Of course, at the beginning there was **Bakunin**. Apparently a rebel anarchist who wrote a serries of discordant, half finished, and erratic essays. A man of action rather than the pen – he had to keep leaving his pen to go and join various uprisings. A believer in the revolutionary power of the peasant and the pleb, and a dreamer. He believed, contrary to Marx, that the unemployed dregs of society 'possessed a turbulent instinct for revolt' as they hadn't been ruined by the corrupting influences of the upper/middle classes. During an uprising in 1849 Bakunin was quickly arrested and thrown into a dungeon for eight years where he lost his teeth. On his release he was sent to Siberia which became his springboard to freedom. He escaped his exile and embarked on a globe trotting extravaganza spreading his revolutionary ideas far and wide.

Then there was **Nechaev** a dangerous plebeian anarchist (some people don't believe in calling him anarchist). Nechaev was heavily into justifying any means towards a revolution. So much so, he went and murdered a member of his secret anarchist society for disagreeing with him. Known to be a bit of a dictator and conspirator he formed a number of secret groups and fabricated his own arrest and escape from prison to increase his popularity. With a little help from Bakunin, he often issued orders to anarchists on behalf of a fictional international anarchist organisation. A very naughty yet charismatic young man who, while imprisoned (truly this time), charmed his guards and with their help continued to operate his revolutionary programme from the inside. This eventually led to the guards arrest and more shabby prison treatment for himself, finally resulting in his dreadful death.

Kropotkin finally injects a huge amount of moralism into Russian anarchist thought. He is both warm and fluffy and scientific. He thought it inherent in human nature to want to care for each other. Kropotkin studies the behaviour of ants, bees and migrating deer, to form generalisations about how animals care for each other. He also comes up with ideas for the political and economic organisation of human communities. Communism for a start, each according to his or her need from the local storehouse and there's no annoying money involved. *The Conquest of Bread* contains his suggestions about anarchism and how things might work. Lastly, Kropotkin reckons we should all spend some time in the garden and some time curled up with our noses in a book. Kropotkin's critics deride him for thinking the best of human nature. *Isn't it an incredible fault to think the best of people?*

Stormy Petrel a poet and sailor appeared during the 1917 Russian revolution. He is a handsome young man admired for his defence of a bunch of anarchists who had occupied the governor of Moscow's villa since 1905. He came to town with fifty sailors when the anarchists, after living in the house for eleven years, were being hassled by the government to evacuate. I image the villa looked a bit like 128. Two weeks later the anarchists broke into a nearby prison releasing inmates and the villa was raided. As a result – typical Russian anarchist story – Stormy was locked up only to launch an escape from prison. Stormy helped the Bolsheviks overthrow the Provisional Government so of course they claimed him as their own. However he was an anarchist to his death not to mention a mystical oceanic poet.

The story of **Nestor Makhno** is too epic for this article. A militant peasant from the Ukraine who staged many a siege with a band of bandits over the area. He took estates from the ownership of nobles and set up voluntary committees in their place. There was a period there, where the Whites (an invading army) were pushed south, and the Reds stayed to the north, and in the middle with Makhno, there existed a functioning anarchist society, fleetingly. The image of Makhno is of a man with a bunch of courageous people on horseback carrying a black flag flapping gently in the wind across Ukraine.

Volin (meaning freedom) is our sixth Russian anarchist. He was cool because he turned down many offers of riches, pomp, and title. He was born in a privileged household and thought it was crap that people could hardly afford to eat while his family was so well off. He devoted his life to anarchism. He was involved in the 1905 revolution and was arrested and sentenced to Siberia, of course, he escaped and ended up in France. He went back to Russia in 1917 to partake in the revolution. He was an anarcho-syndicalist who made predictions about the fate of the Russian revolution under the Bolsheviks. He said the Bolsheviks are state socialists that will use the authoritarian state apparatus to run the life of the people from the top. He coined the term "red fascism". He wrote prolifically, his works including a history and an encyclopaedia of anarchism @@@

Kawakawa: The best thing since sliced mammoth

Our correspondent Alley Oop *grunts a regular column of tips for hunter-gatherers.*

Kawakawa leaves

MODERN and shiny, yet also a long-time ancestral favourite, kawakawa (*Piper excelsum*) is a fashionable, multi-use plant that's good to be seen lurking amongst.

Io Matua Kore made kawakawa to heal Papatuanuku's broken heart. All those other green things were made later by Tane.

If you know how to use fire, the sour, peppery leaves brew a relaxing tea. They can be used to flavour other foods. The fruit can be eaten raw or fire-users can cook it into a jelly using karengo (*Porphyra* sp.) seaweed as a thickener. *Pterocladia* or *Gigartina* sp. seaweeds will do a better job, if you can find them. Munching it relieves toothache due to the myristicin contained in the leaves. The tea has also been drunk for urinary problems, kidney complaints, constipation, to strenghthen the immune system, as a blood purifier and as an aphrodisiac and, applied to the body, for rheumatism and all kinds of hide problems.

So-called hunter-gatherers who sneak in a little tillage on the side can emulate Maori farmers' pest control method – setting piles of kawakawa on fire between kumara beds. The smoke from the smouldering vegetation poisons those little buzzy things.

Kawakawa can be recognised by the large, thin heart-shaped leaves and jointed bamboo-like stems. Leaves are frequently full of holes eaten by the mysterious brown looper caterpillar, whose magical powers ward off the plant's insecticidal compounds. It's a small tree or shrub and is commonly found growing in shady areas at low altitudes. In the hot season the yellow-orange, finger-shaped fruit appear. Ranges from about halfway up the South Island to Cape Reinga, plus the Chatham, Kermadec and Norfolk Islands.

The foliage also provides useful cover when you want to jump out and club somebody. Happy gathering!

Review

How to become a noble work of nature

Berkman, Alexander, The ABC of Anarchism
Reviewed by Tina McIvor

AFTER reading *The ABC of Anarchism* 1929 you are left with the feeling that the revolution really could happen. It is only a matter of true anarchist ideas becoming prevalent in people's minds, workers becoming unified and resolute, a general strike, and, as Berkman says, our evolution will automatically boil into revolution.

Berkman explains that the revolution is a minor part of the picture for anarchism and what really concerns us is how society is organised before and after the revolution.

The book is a rather quaint yet essential anarchist read. Berkman refers to the "free and generous sunshine of anarchy" that will replace the current chaos and violence inherent in the state. He says, "Man (sic) would indeed become the noble work of nature that he has until now visioned himself only in his dreams". The noble savage idea and the sexist language used is indicative of Berkman's time.

Berkman uses the Russian Revolution as an example throughout the book. This has the effect of highlighting the difference between Bolshevik ideas and those of anarchism. Once the party had gained power the revolution had failed and consequently the system of rationing (post revolution) was based on inequality. "Shirkers" he says should be treated the same way as workers because it's a waste of time and resources to do otherwise.

Berkman provides a good level of historical insight and a large amount of quaint 1920s propaganda. A great read!

Things could be worse...

Execution of anarchists

(Editorial from The Washington Post, February 25, 1908)

"...an anarchist, one of those monstrous and miscreated beings who, whether sane or insane, are equally deadly.

"These hideous creatures are not native to American soil. They do not spring from American parents. They are the degenerate offscouring of centuries of repression, ignorance, and vice in other lands. Why should the United States be cursed with them? There is nothing here for them... They will find no anarchy here, except such as lies like a serpent coiled in their own hearts.

"It has been shown once more, in shocking fashion, that anarchists, though few, are terrible enemies of the government and the race... No law excluding them can be too rigidly enforced; no law punishing them can be too swiftly called into action... Anarchists should be kept out of the United States on penalty of death. The presence of an avowed anarchist is intolerable. The law should provide that any anarchist smuggling himself into this country—a proved, murderous anarchist—should suffer death. In no other way, apparently, can they be prevented from entering this country and playing their deadly trade. Since an avowal of anarchy has been found to be equivalent to an intention to commit murder, needing only opportunity to ripen in into action, an anarchist is, in fact, a murderer, even before he has done the deed, and he should be executed accordingly."

A response to the murder of a priest by an Italian anarchist. The murder was possibly a case of mistaken identity. The anarchist was executed.

Meet your neighbourhood anarchist No. 1:

Lyn *Spencer*

A semi-regular series of interviews with common or garden anarchists

International action hero: Lyn Spencer lurks in a seedy European port

Interview by Barrie Sargeant

Q: Where did you grow up and what were the experiences that influenced you?

A: I grew up in Wellington. My big influence on me as a teenager was farming. I was really into being a sheep farmer when I was about 14. I used to go up to a farm every weekend to train my dogs to be sheepdogs and ride my horse and dream about working on a huge station and mustering sheep.

When I left school I decided I was going to go to farm training college. I did that for about six months. I got my beginners certificate in shearing sheep, which wasn't too bad because I got a special recommendation. I suppose being one of the few females on the course and because the guys relied on their strength and being smaller in build myself, I paid more attention to technique. Then I got a job on a farm, it was about 1,000 acres. That was a live-in job and I got paid shit. It was good in some ways because it was a large farm and I could ride my horse around in the weekend. But after having lots of jobs killing sheep and lambs I decided it wasn't the job for me. So I went back home and became a vegetarian [laughter].

My sister, Anita, introduced me to punk which became a big part of my life. I moved into a flat with a whole lot of punks. That was in Karori and that was vegie too. I went to Onslow College and did Physics and Maths. I had a vague idea of being a radiographer, but I was shit at Physics so that went out the window and once I started going to punk gigs I sort of lost interest as well.

After Wellington I moved up to Taranaki and more punk gigs and too much drinking [laughter]. Some really good friends had moved there you see, so I had sort of tagged along. We had a really cool place in the country and had all these ideas of having a vegie garden and being really active [laughter] it didn't really work, just went to too much booze really.

I'm more of an urban person now, but it was cool being able to move my horse up there and there were neat waterholes as well.

Oh, I had one job when I lived up in Taranaki. I worked in a condom factory for six months. I was cutting sheep intestines down to eight inches. They were made that way because of latex allergies and sent to Japan. It was weird being a vegetarian and doing that so I tried cutting down on the animal products while I was there to ease the conscience.Then I moved back down to Wellington and was a bit lost really. I did volunteer work a bit for the NZ Anti-Vivisection Society, doing the bookkeeping.

Q: So at what stage did you define yourself as an anarchist?

A: It was mainly meeting [long time partner] Ross really. It was at a national unemployed and beneficiaries meeting. We got talking about anarchism and when he went back up to Auckland he sent me down loads of books. I loved them. There was an introductory one about anarchism by Nicholas Walter and other light pamphlets. I really loved the situationist ones by Spectacular Times. I'd write up pages on large pieces of paper and hang up the pages in stations. I'd think "Oh, if everyone could only read this!" [laughter].

Next I went up to Auckland and ended up moving there. I started getting involved in [long running anarchist zine] *The State Adversary* and printing. Then I moved into College Hill which was a big warehouse space with about ten of us living there. We had an anarchist bookshop in the front, Books from the Black Lagoon, and I did shifts there. I was there for about two and a half years, and they were full and fun years.

I got involved in the unemployed rights movement. That was a real eye opener, especially because of the police. Yeah, just realising how much they lie and people getting arrested for nothing, just on the say so of cops. Seeing them in action too, like when they went into the Unemployed Rights Centre in Auckland. Sam [Buchanan] got batoned in the face and Ross was knocked unconscious too. Seeing Sam having a seizure on the floor! Well, the only other time I'd seen a seizure was a sheep after it had been killed. I thought he was dead – it scared the shit out of me. Then seeing how much they lied when it got to court.

I got involved in McGillicuddy stuff too, that was really fun. We did 'pacifist warfare' battles. I remember one where we rowed out to an island on Auckland Harbour on inflatable boats that shouldn't really have been in anything more than a swimming pool. [laughter] Most of them were submerging by the time we tried to get back to the mainland. We conquered a piece of land for anarchism, with a black flag flying and a cardboard castle. [laughter]

Then we went overseas. I'd always wanted to travel. I think that was because my dad was an engineer on ships because he was always off here and there to different countries. I used to like the stories when he came back. Also mum is from England, so the northern hemisphere was interesting. We went to

Tahiti, Singapore and Los Angeles. We went around the States for about six weeks, hooking up with punks and anarchists.

Q: What were your impressions of what was happening over there compared to what you had seen in New Zealand?

A: I'd been involved in anarcha-feminism so I kept asking where the anarcha-fem groups were. It was quite thriving in NZ so I thought it would be the same over there but it wasn't. I didn't come across any groups in the States.

Q: So can you talk a bit specifically about being involved in anarcha-fem groups?

A: I went to an anarchist conference in 1991 and there was a workshop on anarcha-feminism. Most of the women who went to that were really buzzed about it and were really interested in the theory and history of it.

We went back to our own towns and formed our own groups, mostly in Auckland and Wellington. There were a few individuals on their own. We started up *Sekhmet*, an anarcha-feminist magazine. The first one we did in Auckland was mainly me and Shannon. We sent it out to all the political women's groups across the country for free. It was really good socially and also a learning curve for a lot of us as well. The conferences were good too we had turnouts of about one hundred women.

Getting back to overseas… after the States, we went to the U.K. I did meet up with one anarcha-fem group and that was in Glasgow. That was really cool. They were really laid back and we just sat around nattering with a bottle of wine and it seemed very much like we could have been at home. Then we came back and moved to Wellington. I got involved in the anarcha-fem group and we set up the Freedom Shop. We went overseas again in '98 to Melbourne, Sydney and Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Hong Kong and up through China and did the Trans-Siberian across to Europe. That was really fun. We hooked up with a couple of other Kiwis so there were five of us in this van. We met all the various punks in different cities, going to lots of gigs.

We went to the UK and New York. Going to Berlin was cool too, because it seemed like a huge autonomous zone. It was all squatted and seeing things like the peoples' kitchens, with all the labour being done voluntarily.

Q: What differences did you see overseas that you liked or didn't like?

A: That's a big think that one [laughter]. When I went to San Diego I was just blown away by how much they knew. I thought it was a case of just having access to a lot more information really – the internet has helped us a lot with that since Also I remember thinking in some countries it was sad that they had to spend so much time and energy fighting against fascism instead of concentrating on building up more positive things.

Q: You now have two kids, so can you talk a bit about how having children effects your activism and life in general?

A: I had to slow down [laughter]. Yeah, from going in to the anarchist office every day it pretty much slowed right down. I was definitely right out for a couple of years and I'm only just starting to get back into it really. It's been the same for music, haven't been able to go to so many gigs and I used to travel up and down the country quite a bit. That stopped as well.

A lot of it is tiredness and less money, not that I'm complaining 'cause it is totally amazing being a parent and hanging out with the kids. Its quite neat going to playcentre too, cool being involved in an organisation that is collectively run on a bottom-up federated structure nationwide.

Q: Talking now about some other stuff, do you watch TV?

A: I've just got back into watching Coronation Street, I'm a big fan. I don't have any favourite characters at the moment though. They are all pretty miserable. The villain they have at the moment is horrible – he's made a mess of his girlfriend's life. [laughter].

Q: What music are you listening to?

A: I still like punk lots. I like a lot of NZ bands but also listening to bands from all around the world singing in a variety of languages. I also like a bit of Western music, the old stuff that sings about cowboys and gunfights and running away from the sheriff [laughter]. I don't like all the bland commercial pop music and just don't follow it.

Q: What sort of movies do you like?

A: I like Martial Arts movies and action because it looks amazing and it looks really graceful but powerful at the same time. I like the ones set in China in olden times, not so much the modern stuff the 'heroes' being cops (yuk). I like Michelle Yeoh. I admire her posture, it's amazing and mine is such crap [laughter]. Just watching her do anything like drinking a cup of tea is

Lyn Spencer

great. I think the idea of a couple of people taking out the baddies is appealing too, if only it was that easy [laughter]

Q: Any movies you would recommend?

A: Drunken Master II with Jackie Chan, Tai Chi Master with Jet Li, Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon, Kung Fu Hustle, the Matrix.

Q: Any other movies? What about books?

A: The odd drama like a Ken Loach film or something. I really liked the movie Land & Freedom. UK comedies like *The Full Monty* too. Books – I like escapist stuff like Ann Rice and her vampires. Stuff that's quite far from reality. I don't get much reading done these days, but I did read *The Da Vinci Code* in three days. I really enjoyed it but I haven't seen the movie yet. I find it hard reading political books because they often get me down or keep me up half the night fuming.

Q: Changing subjects, how about food?

A: I love food! I like felafels, burritos, pizza, Chinese food, a good Indian curry. One of my favourite meals is taro rolls from a sadly a now non-existent restaurant in Otahuhu.

Q: Any favourite restaurants?

A: I don't eat out a hell of a lot. Um, there is Beijing in Newtown and Aunty Mena's in Cuba Street and The Curry Club.

Q: What about cooking for yourself?

A: I like doing cakes quite a lot at the moment. I've got a basic cake recipe and you can stick/sneak almost anything into it and it comes out alright and it's a good way of stuffing healthy food into the kids without them noticing, like ground nuts. [laughter] I never used to like cooking but now its quite fun. Having kids has been a bit of a motivation for that.

Q: What are your plans for the future?

A: [long pause] To star in a Martial Arts movie [laughter] @@@

The 13 Greatest Movies of All-time

Monty Python & the Holy Grail (1975)
Yes, the first-rate movie that spawned a plague of fourth-rate fans quoting its contents while drunk at student parties, has references to llamas in its opening credits. Great way to start a movie.

Limbo (1999)
A ponderous outing from indie-film auteur John Sayles. It stars regular collaborator David Straithairn as a washed up ex-basketballer wasting his life away in Alaska. Not on par with Sayle's best output, but this movie is redeemed by a reference to alpaca farming.

Mean Time (1983)
Tim Roth and Gary Oldman scuttle about the housing estates of Thatcher's London. The movie mentions racing llamas in the Middle East. This reference to llamas is a globule of surreal fun that provides a well-timed fillip to an otherwise depressing, but worthy film by Mike Leigh.

Napoleon Dynamite (2004)
Featuring an ebony-wooled camelid beauty named Tina. Though only having a cameo role, her screen charisma completely blows the eponymous 'anti-hero' of the flick into smithereens. Watch Tina and swoon!

Troy (2004)
Brad Pitt and sundry humans strut around looking silly and pretending to do ancient stuff. Often lauded as a subject because of an equine ruse, the real interest from seeing this version of events derives from a blink-and-you-miss-it appearance by a llama during a city evacuation scene. An intriguing lifting of the veil of silence concerning the role South American camelids may have played in this part of the world.

I'll Be There (2003)
Young singer Charlotte Church makes her screen debut as the lost love child of a 1980s pop star.

The ex-singer is found living as a lonely drunk in Cardiff. It is not hard to guess whether they will find each other, with an early appearance by the father's llama heralding a warm and fuzzy outcome. Nice movie.

Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid (1969)
An overrated movie with a hideous musical interlude. It follows the exploits of a couple of outlaws. Mostly worth seeing for the appearance of a llama when the pair arrive in Bolivia, in the second half of the film.

Aguirre: Wrath of God (1972)
An excellent case study of megalomania, showing what happens when you let mad aristocrats lead you up a creek without a paddle. Filmed in Peru and memorable for its breath taking opening scenes showing llamas pressed into involuntary servitude by the forces of colonialist oppression.

Barn of the Blood Llamas (1997)
See it if you dare! This is a z-grade exploitation flick not for the faint hearted or politically sensitive. This movie is included on this list for the title alone. Don't say you weren't warned.

The Emperor's New Groove (2000)
The emperor of Peru is suffering from a severe case of hubris and is reformed by transformation into a llama. Despite a political perspective that believes in the possibility of enlightened monarchy, it is hard not to recommend this shiny animated tale.

Dr Doolittle (1967)
An early warning regarding the ill effects of genetic engineering, as evidenced by the existence of the infamous Push Me Pull You, a two-headed llama.

The Bible (1966)
John Huston takes the auteur theory of directorial authorship to its extremes by not only directing but narrating the voice of God! An assortment of Hollywood 'big names' make lots of noise and overact. Only saved by the existence of two llamas in a key scene (hint: there is a big boat). They say the book is better.

Night at the Museum (2006)
A movie with an excellent basic premise, fails to live up to its potential despite a cast of competent comedic actors and a screen filled with activity. A last minute appearance by an alpaca proves quality beats quantity.

— *Barrie Sargeant*

A capitalist displays Monsanto's latest GM horror.